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U.S.-French Teamwork Said to Smash Drug Ring

By CHRISTOPHER WREN

Federal narcotics agents, working closely with their French counterparts, have smashed a major operation that smuggled about 575 pounds of heroin from France into the United States in the last three years, the Government announced yesterday.

The Turkish-grown narcotic, which officials estimated was worth over $65-million on the street, was reportedly smuggled through Canada inside electric-guitar amplifiers and automobiles—devices reminiscent of the suspense film "The French Connection."

Sixteen persons — seven French and nine American — werer named in a sealed indictment, which was opened and jointly disclosed yesterday by Whitney North Seymour Jr., United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Daniel P. Casey, New York regional director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

Coordinated Raids

Two of the French defendannts were seized last weekend in Marseilles in a raid that was coordinated with subsequent arrests in New York two nights ago. The Frenchmen have been described by the French police as the most important traffickers ever arrested in France.

According to the indictment, which was filed Jan. 8, the 16 defendants conspired to import and distribute the heroin in the United States from Jan. 1, 1968, through April 30, 1971.

The first shipments were allegedly hidden inside the guitar amplifiers of a band traveling from Paris to Montreal. The narcotics were then shipped on to New York. Federal sources said the band was not aware of the illicit traffick, but the sources declined to explain further.

When this device proved too limited, the heroin was allegedly concealed in several automobiles—including a Citroën, a Ford, and an unidentified sports car that were shipped to Montreal and then driven to New York.

Some transactions in New York, in which payments were said to range from $100,000 to $300,000, reportedly took place in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral, at the New York Hilton, Madison Square Garden, the Edison Totel and the Abbey Victoria Hotel.

In the rendezvous at the Hilton, the shipping papers reportedly were handed over for a car containing 93 kilos—more than 200 pounds—of heroin, with a wholesale price of $981,000. Authorities said that some of the narcotics reached the street.

According to Federal sources, United States agents worked for eight months to crack the international ring. Mr. Casey gave credit to the close cooperation of French narcotics agents.

Authorities say that the defendants will be tried in their respective countries, with evidence exchanged between American and French officials. Conviction on each of the smuggling counts could bring each American defendant a maximum of 20 years in prison and a $20,000 fine. Federal agents described the French penalties as even stiffer.

Lawyer Among Accused

Those accused of trafficking charges included Horacio Quinones, 55 years old, a New York lawyer, who lives at 1480 West Terrace Circle, Teaneck, N. J. He has been charged with smuggling correspondence into and out of the Federal detention headquarters at 427 West Street—a charge that could bring an additional 10 years upon conviction.

French authorities reportedly believe that the two principal defendants, Jean-Baptiste Croce and Benard Mari, may have been responsible for importing a tone of heroin annually into the United States. Croce, 52, was described as a Corsican of major stature in the French underworld. His alleged lieutenant, Mari, 57, owns a bar, Le Gondelier, which is frequented by corsican mobsters in Marseilles.

The other French defendants are Joseph Marro, 53, Felix Olivie, 70, Joseph Lucarotti, 58; Jean Cardon, and an unknown fugitive with the alias of Roger DuBuis.

Of the American defendants, Anthony Segura, 29, and Ralph Santana, 46, arealready serving sentences for narcotics convictions in the Federal penitentialy in Atlanta.

Arrested so far, besides Mr. Quinones, are Herman Rivera, 30(of 800 Grand Concourse, the Bronx; Delia Burgos, 33, of 59-B Locust Avenue, New Rochelle, N. Y., and George Alvarez, 49, of 109-19 205th Place, Hollis, Queens.

Still at large are those not yet arrested as of yesterday are Lillian Santana, 43; Robert Martinez, 29, and Antonio Flores, 25, all with no addresses available.